



# Arizona Department of Agriculture

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## ***PRESS RELEASE***

### ***FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE***

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### **First Case of “Sleeping Sickness” This Year Found in Sentinel Chickens**

(Phoenix, AZ) -- The first case of sleeping sickness, or Western Equine Encephalomyelitis, has been discovered this year. Three flocks of sentinel chickens (used for detection) located between Yuma and Gadsden, Arizona have been found to carry the disease. While these flocks will likely not show symptoms, birds act as a reservoir of the disease and also serve as an indicator that mosquitoes infected with the disease are on the move. This disease has been in the United States for a number of years.

This disease closely mimics West Nile Virus: It is transmitted via mosquitoes, can be deadly in humans and livestock and the symptoms are nearly identical. We typically refer to this type of disease as “viral encephalitis” or “sleeping sickness” because the effects of the virus in the brain make the animal often act “sleepy”.

#### **What are the clinical symptoms in humans?**

- Symptoms range from mild flu-like illness to frank encephalitis, coma and death.

#### **What is the result, if left untreated, in livestock?**

- Horses will act “dumb” or may die, as this infection causes inflammation in the brain.

#### **Are any avenues of protection available for myself or my livestock?**

- There is no licensed vaccine for human use, but you can vaccinate your horses against the disease.

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